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# DESTINATION DOWNTOWN



We are currently featuring stories on the downtown areas of our region's major cities. We hope to provide a little insight, history, highlights, and things to do and see from locals in our area. If you're interested in a day trip experience and want to learn more about our cities, this could be an insider's guide for you. This month, we look at Rogers. Next month, we head to Siloam Springs.

## ROGERS DOWNTOWN DISTRICT GROWS WHILE PRESERVING HISTORY

Charles Warrington Rogers, general manager of the St. Louis-San Francisco Transcontinental Railroad, approved a stop for the Frisco Line in a community where water, climate, soil, transportation and hard workers produced bountiful harvests of apples, peaches and other crops. The addition of the depot, on land owned by B.F. Sikes, meant farmers could get food to markets in Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Kansas.



PHOTO BY PHILIP HAUGHEY



PHOTO BY PHILIP HAUGHEY

Rogers and his wife, Mary, made personal investments in the town to promote its growth. Residents showed their appreciation by naming the town after him. In May 1881, the town became known as Rogers.

Main Street Rogers, a nonprofit member of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, was organized in 1985 as an economic promoter of the downtown district. Originally known as the Walnut Street Historic District, the area encompasses blocks of First and Second streets and a block of Elm Street bordered by Walnut and Poplar.

"First and Walnut have long been identified as the primary commercial streets," said John Burroughs, director of the Rogers Historical Museum. "At the turn of the 20th century, commercial and residential architecture played a central role in defining the character of communities, just as it does today. In less than six years from the



town's founding, Rogers had three churches with another under construction, Rogers Academy, mills, businesses and new homes."

Wood frame buildings with false fronts, similar to frontier towns of the time, were eventually replaced with brick structures.

Today, the district embraces and preserves its past while welcoming businesses, shops, restaurants and gathering places. Its development is evident in the Colonial Revival architecture style of the post office building, the Spanish Colonial Revival design of the Lane Hotel, and buildings reflecting Italianate, Renaissance Revival, Classical Revival, Mediterranean Revival and other styles.

"This strong historic character continues to bring businesses and individuals downtown," said Burroughs. "The old buildings continue to be used and maintained. It allows a connection to our past to live as the old structures find new uses."

Levi's Gastro Lounge & Low Bar is a perfect example. The gourmet bar sits in the basement of the three-story red brick Progressive Life Building, affectionately referred to by locals as "Poplar Plaza" due to its commanding presence at Second and Poplar.

FRISCO PARK CLOCK - PHOTO PROVIDED BY VISIT ROGERS



# Shop Historic Downtown Rogers, Arkansas

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## DESTINATION DOWNTOWN

The 1911 structure formerly housed Mutual Union Aid Insurance Co. Levi's is in a space previously used to print the *Rogers Democrat*. According to owner Levi Rush, his bar is "a low place where the common ground between life, love and laughter come together in the form of flavor."

Other nearby favorites are Iron Horse Coffee Company, The Rail - A Pizza Company, Parkside Public burger and sandwich shop, Heirloom Food & Wine seasonal-based boutique restaurant, Kirby's Kupcakes, Las Palmas and Brick Street Brews, a tap room featuring Arkansas-brewed craft beers and a selection of wine.

Shoppers browse Valere Rene Handbags for stylish, custom choices; PIGMINT Flower Shop for plants, luxury candles and gifts; Red Door Vintage for vintage restyled furniture; The Rabbit's Lair Creative Fabric and Fiber Shop for fabric, wool, yarn and



PHOTO BY PHILIP HAUGHEY

PHOTO BY PHILIP HAUGHEY



stitchery supplies; Miss Judi's Wisteria Lane for clothing and home accessories; Vintage Antiques and The Rusty Chair Antiques & Cool Stuff for unique vintage items; Dollar Saver for antique, modern and handmade home and garden items; and The Cottage at The Barn for vendors selling reused, repurposed, antique and vintage items. Other local favorites include Golden's Jewelry, Ed Cooley's White River Gallery, Poor Richard's Art Gallery and Women's Pavilion.

Newer retailers are Emporium 23, featuring bohemian clothing, jewelry and more; and Avenue Design Co., offering home décor, ladies accessories and gifts.

"With the historic buildings and brick streets, restaurants and bars, Rogers has a unique feel to Northwest Arkansas," said Bill Watkins, a 30-year Rogers attorney with Watkins, Boyer, Gray, Noblin & Curry.

Other attractions are the Daisy Airgun Museum, Rogers Little Theater, Rogers Opera House and Rogers Historical Museum.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY VISIT ROGERS



The Daisy museum preserves products and artifacts of the Daisy Company, including the signature Red Ryder Model 25 pump gun, which celebrated its 100-year anniversary in 2014.

Victory Theater opened in 1927 as a movie/vaudeville space before closing in the 1970s. Since 2008, Rogers Little Theater has used the building, offering plays, musicals and special events.

The Opera House, built in the 1880s, is being restored. It will house retail outlets and offices. When movies became popular in the 1920s, it declined in popularity and was used for boxing matches in the 1930s.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY VISIT ROGERS



The Rogers Historical Museum traces area heritage through exhibits and programs, including the Attic, a family-friendly hands-on space for children and adults.

"Most of the historic commercial buildings have apartments on the second floor, and the original City Hall is being renovated into 11 beautiful apartments," said Dana Mather, director of Main Street Rogers. "Several other buildings with apartments are in stages of construction, and the residential neighborhoods surrounding the commercial area are full of hidden gems. We're proud of our history, which is why we have preserved so much of it in the buildings and the bricks on the streets, but we are a vibrant neighborhood that is always changing and growing."

The 31st Annual Frisco Festival is Aug. 28-29 downtown. The event and fundraiser includes activities, food, rides, vendors and live music. On Sept. 19, Razor Rail pulls out of Frisco Park, taking Razorback fans to Fayetteville for the football game against Texas Tech. The hour-long ride gives "rail-gaters" a game-day experience without the hassle of parking. Oktoberfest, a day of music, fun, bratwurst, pretzels and more food, is Oct. 3 in Frisco Park. ■

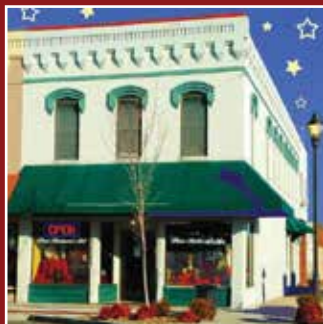
For more information, visit  
[www.mainstreetrogers.com](http://www.mainstreetrogers.com).



## Explore Historic Downtown Rogers, Arkansas

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